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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# **TWO MORE CONVICTED OF HOSTAGE TAKING RECEIVE 10 YEARS IN PRISON**

**TUCSON, Ariz.** -- The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced that on August 31, 2004, Jesus Manuel Palma-Soto, DOB 3/25/85 and Jesus Ernesto Solis-Torres, DOB 11/6/86, of Mexico were each sentenced to ten years in prison to be followed by five years supervised release. Palma-Soto, Solis-Torres and three co-defendants, Andres Torres-Castro, DOB 11/9/82; Eduardo Loriel Soto, DOB 12/9/78; and Francisco Verdugo-Fernandez, DOB 10/4/77, pleaded guilty to Conspiracy to Commit Hostage Taking in federal district court by in Tucson, Ariz.

The defendants had been charged with violating Title 18 of the United States Code, Section 1203. On March 29, 2004 the defendants approached a group of 23 undocumented aliens who were walking through the desert near Three Points, Ariz. The defendants had numerous firearms, including a rifle and more than one handgun. The defendants ordered the group to lay on the ground while they robbed them. The defendants told the group that they would be taken to a nearby trailer where members of the group could contact a family member

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to pay a ransom. One member of the group escaped and contacted a Department of Public Safety officer at the junction of State Route 286 and State Route 86. The subject led U.S. Border Patrol officers to the area where the group was last seen and they were eventually able to locate the group still in the desert. The five defendants fled the scene but were later apprehended. Border Patrol recovered a rifle, a .38 caliber handgun and numerous rounds of ammunition.

A conviction for conspiracy to commit hostage taking carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine or both. Co-defendant Verdugo-Fernandez was sentenced to ten years in prison to be followed by five years supervised release on July 30, 2004. The remaining two co-defendants will be sentenced on October 1, 2004.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Pima County Sheriff's Department, Arizona Department of Public Safety and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The prosecution is being handled by Gerard M. Guerin, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

CASE NUMBER: CR-04-1064-005-TUC-FRZ  
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